

April 2009

**Advising
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**Summary Report on the Use of
Comprehensive Regional
Planning Funds [PA 095-0677]
by the Springfield-Sangamon
County Regional Planning
Commission**

The Importance of Illinois Comprehensive Regional Planning Funds to Local Success

CONNECTING LOCAL NEEDS WITH REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

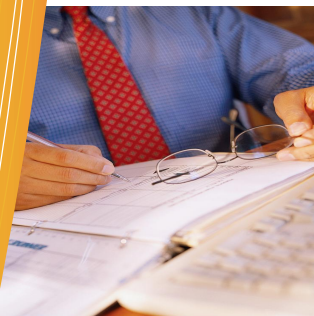
While communities in Sangamon County know the importance of cooperative, comprehensive and continuing planning to long-term success, many do not have access to the resources necessary for effective, professional planning. When planning efforts have occurred, they have most often been locally focused rather than regional, limited to the specific needs of the time rather than on-going, and often limited to narrow matters, such as land use, rather than entertaining issues and opportunities of broader scope. And since urban areas tend to have more resources than rural ones, rural areas are often overlooked and unable to make use of state and federal funds that require a local comprehensive plan.



The funding provided to the State's Metropolitan Planning Organizations through the Illinois Comprehensive Regional Planning Fund (PA 095-0677) now makes it possible for resources to be available for planning in a consistent and stable way.

As a recipient of these funds, in 2008 the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) established a planning framework for their use. This framework is built around the philosophy that:

- *Regional success matters* if local success is to be achieved.
- *Planning strategically and comprehensively matters* if regional success is to be achieved.
- *Local interest and guidance matters*. If the plan is to be successful, local jurisdictions and their interests must be addressed in both the planning and the plan.
- *Local and regional actions matter*, as visions do not become realities in the absence of actions.
- *Continuous reassessment matters*, as no plan can consider every contingency, issue or opportunity.



- And *transparency matters*, as the public needs to have input into and understand the strategies to be implemented and their anticipated results.

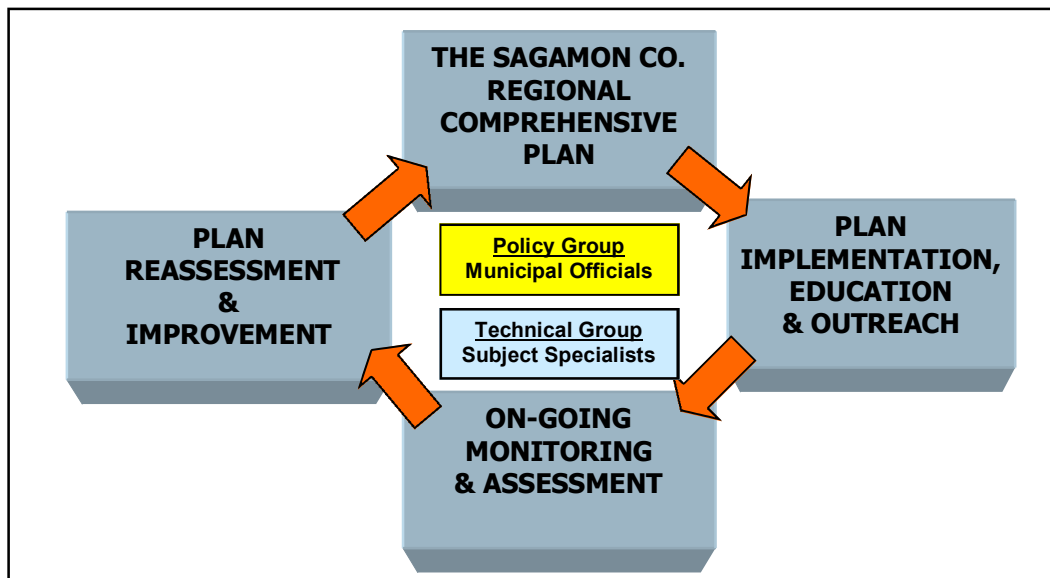
This philosophy was used to organize and prioritize two phases of effort that the SSCRPC is implementing using the funds provided by PA 095-0677. This summary report describes the activities that the SSCRPC is conducting thanks to the availability of these state funds.

The Framework for Comprehensive Regional Planning in Sangamon County

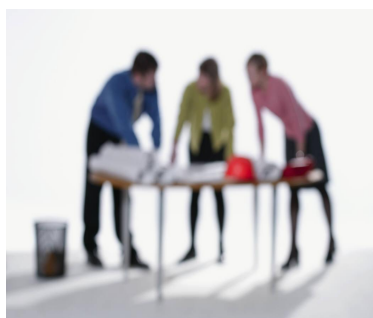
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Based upon the regional planning philosophy adopted by the SSCRPC, the Commission developed a framework intended to address the regional planning task in a unified and on-going way. The intention was to establish a planning system that could be maintained over time and would not become static once a plan is adopted.

Four “building blocks” were identified around which the on-going regional comprehensive planning process would be developed and maintained.



The activities described on the next two pages were designed to support the four building blocks noted above. They were also designed to be developed and implemented in more than one phase so that they could build upon one another.



It is important to note that the activities identified in this document could not be done without the assistance provided through the Illinois Comprehensive Regional Planning Fund. These funds have made it possible to address regional planning in a cooperative, comprehensive and continuing way, and have also allowed for the leveraging of local and federal funds in support of regional planning activities.

Phase I Planning Efforts: 2008-2009

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS BEST PRACTICE REVIEW

SANGAMON REGIONAL PLAN

The primary activity being undertaken using these funds is the development of a long-range, comprehensive plan for the region. As noted on page 3, the planning process involves an alliance of the municipal jurisdictions in Sangamon County partially modeled after the process the SSCRPC used successfully to develop a multi-jurisdictional regional natural hazards mitigation plan, and organized around a structure similar to the Policy and Technical committee structure used in the metropolitan area for transportation planning.

Efforts to date include: (1) developing the planning process to be used and identifying the scope and elements of the plan proposed; (2) base data collection, review and analysis ; (3) development of supporting documents and background information needed to inform those involved in the process; and (4) obtaining agreement from the municipal jurisdictions to take part. By the end of August, 2008, all of the jurisdictions identified on page 6 had agreed to take part in the project. The first meeting of the Policy Group, made up of the elected leaders of the municipalities, was held in December, 2008. SSCRPC staff has identified members of the Technical Groups that will advise the Policy Group and the groups have started their work. It is anticipated that the project will address the following areas: Community & Public Amenities; Economic & Technology Development; Social Services & Education; Environment & Natural Resources; Housing; Heritage and Culture; Transportation; Land Use & Development. I

In addition, availability of Comprehensive Regional Planning funds have made it possible for the SSCRPC to underwrite part of the cost for individual communities to develop local comprehensive plans.

TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS: Development Review Tracking System

To encourage transparency and increase planning staff efficiency, the SSCRPC is developing a project tracking system for land development projects and zoning cases that will allow the public and the private development community to follow development projects on-line throughout the process. The tracking system would not only allow the public to know where developments are taking place and their status, but also allow them to actually review the public documents — such as site plans, preliminary plans, and final plats — related to these projects. This project is currently being modeled after the Development Activity Monitoring System (DAMS) used by Prince George's County, MD. The project is now in the exploratory stages and if successful would be funded through a mix of PA 095-0677 and local funds provided through Sangamon County. This would be the first project of its kind in Illinois, and would greatly increase the transparency of the land development process while at the same time creating an additional tool for local economic development.

BEST PRACTICE REVIEW

As part of the comprehensive planning effort, SSCRPC staff are visiting other communities and regions to assess and learn from similar initiatives. Visits to MPOs and regional planning agencies in Illinois are planned in 2009. Working through the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, SSCRPC staff have taken part in one best practice visit to Springfield, MO, and Indianapolis, IN.

Phase II Planning Efforts: 2009-2010

PERFORMANCE MONITORING
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT
DEVELOPMENT READINESS
BEST PRACTICE TRANSFER

PERFORMANCE MONITORING: SANGSTAT

Effective planning requires a constant monitoring of the environment to determine the effectiveness of the strategies identified by the comprehensive plan. To accomplish this end, and based upon the priorities identified in the regional plan, the SSCRPC will develop benchmarks for the priority areas and a system to monitor progress toward achieving them. Although it will not track administrative data, this system, which we are calling *SangStat*, will be much like the StateStat systems being used in Washington State and Maryland, and CityStat used in some municipal jurisdictions. Assessment of these systems is already under way.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT & PLANNING ASSISTANCE

As an anticipated outgrowth of the comprehensive planning effort, SSCRPC staff will work with individual communities in the region to assess their needs and identify areas of improvement relevant to the regional plan. The community needs assessment will be modeled after a benchmarking system developed by the Corporation for Enterprise Development. As part of the assessment the community will be able to compare itself to the region as a whole and other communities in the region based upon factors generally associated with long-term growth. This assessment will provide a useful starting point for the updating or development of local comprehensive plans.

DEVELOPMENT READINESS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

One of the on-going needs of smaller, rural communities in Sangamon County is assistance with economic development. This need has been identified by work being done under the auspices of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce's Quantum-5 Growth Partnership. Initial work is currently underway to develop a training program and package designed primarily for small rural communities that will help them to understand the economic development market place and pull together the information most often requested by site location consultants. As part of this program community leaders will work through a simulated site request so they can assess the completeness of the information they have available to respond to a location search.

BEST PRACTICE & LOCAL INNOVATION TRANSFER

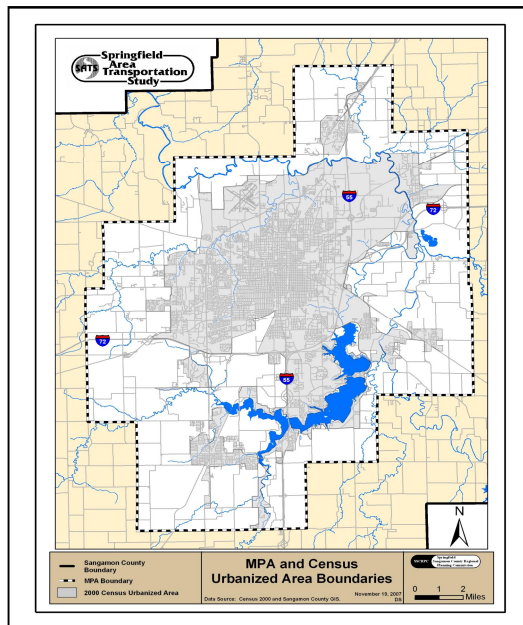
Often solutions exist for local problems but a municipality may not know that it exists or how information pertaining to it can be obtained. As part of its commitment of Comprehensive Regional Planning funds, the SSCRPC will develop a clearinghouse of best practices coded by problem area and will make this information available to municipalities in the region through an internet based electronic newsletter. The SSCRPC will also track the transfer of these practices in the region and establish an on-line peer mentoring system that would link communities that have successfully adopted — or developed — an improved practice with other communities interested in adopting it.

Planning Areas for Regional Comprehensive Plan

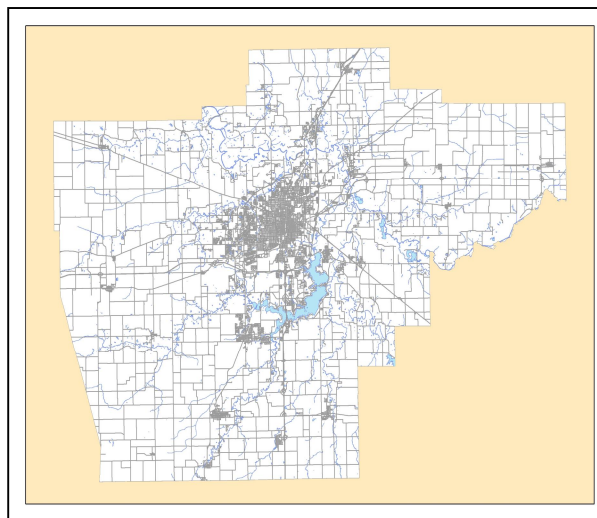
Initial Regional Plan Participating Municipal Jurisdictions

- Auburn
- Buffalo
- Chatham
- Curran
- Dawson
- Grandview
- Illiopolis
- Leland Grove
- Loami
- New Berlin
- Pawnee
- Pleasant Plains
- Riverton
- Rochester
- Sangamon County
- Sherman
- Southern View
- Springfield
- Thayer
- Williamsville

Metropolitan Planning Area



Regional Planning Area: Sangamon County



Effective Planning, Affecting Lives

THE SPRINGFIELD-SANGAMON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) is the joint planning body for the City of Springfield and Sangamon County. It also serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the area through the Springfield Area Transportation Study (SATS). Along with its ongoing responsibilities to Sangamon County and Springfield, the Planning Commission works with many other municipalities, public and semi-public agencies throughout the area to promote orderly growth and redevelopment, and conducts numerous research studies, analytic reviews and planning projects each year.

The Commission that oversees this work is made up of 17 members that include representatives from the Sangamon County Board, Springfield City Council, special units of government, and six appointed citizens from the City and County. The Executive Director is appointed by the Executive Policy Board of the Commission and confirmed by the Sangamon County Board. In addition to overseeing the planning work of the Commission, he also oversees Sangamon County's Department of Zoning and Building Safety.

Through the efforts of its professional staff, the Planning Commission provides overall planning services related to land use, housing, recreation, transportation, economics, environment and social services, and conducts many special projects for its member jurisdictions.

The SSCRPC prepares area-wide planning documents and assists the county, cities, and villages, as well as special districts, with planning activities. The staff reviews all proposed subdivisions and makes recommendations on all City and County zoning and variance requests. It also serves as Floodplain Administrator, Census coordinator, and local A-95 review clearinghouse, processing and reviewing all Federally funded applications for the County.

The Planning Commission also maintains existing base maps, Census tract maps, township and zoning maps and the road name map for the County.

The SSCRPC's Executive Director is also the Plats Officer for Sangamon County. Divisions of land must be reviewed by the Plats Officer to ensure compliance with the State Plat Act and local zoning and subdivision regulations.



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